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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

Identical letters dated 12 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the President of the Security Council, and has the honour to transmit herewith a reply to the Israeli allegations contained in documents A/57/854-S/2003/800, dated 8 August 2003, and A/57/857-S/2003/806, dated 11 August 2003.

It would be appreciated if the text of the two identical letters were circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under items 38 and 158 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mikhail **Wehbe**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/58/150.

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Annex to the identical letters dated 12 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic wishes to provide the following clarification in reply to the Israeli allegations contained in documents S/2003/800, dated 8 August 2003, and S/2003/806, dated 11 August 2003. Those two documents are a total falsification and distortion of the facts and a pathetic attempt by Israel to justify its terrorism and its hostility towards the Lebanese people and its occupation of Arab territories.

Israel has continued its hostile attitude towards Lebanon and the Palestinian people and, in the last few days, has stepped up its military campaigns and its direct threats to commit further massacres against the Palestinian and Lebanese people. In the same context, Israel has also uttered threats against the Syrian Arab Republic in an attempt to exacerbate the situation in the Middle East region and to drive the security situation in the region to the point of collapse.

It has become clear to the international community that Israel, which has paralysed the peace process which began with the Madrid Conference in 1991 and has evaded implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), has continued to occupy Arab territories since 1967 and has persisted in its aggressive policies in pursuit of its expansionist aims at the expense of the rights of the Arab people, whether in Syria, Lebanon or Palestine. It was Israel that put an end to six months of calm on both sides of the Blue Line in southern Lebanon by transferring the terrorist actions in which it had habitually engaged in the occupied Palestinian territories, in the form of assassinations, to the southern suburbs of Beirut, blowing up a vehicle and thereby murdering a member of the national resistance in Lebanon. This crime was the spark that led to the recent escalation of the situation in southern Lebanon.

There are inevitably questions concerning the true objectives of Israel underlying this dangerous escalation of the situation in which Syria and Lebanon have made every possible effort to calm matters down in southern Lebanon. However, the success of those efforts has been thwarted by the ongoing daily provocations by Israel against the sovereignty of Lebanon by both air and sea as stated in paragraph 3 of the most recent report of the Secretary-General issued on 23 July 2003 as document S/2003/728: "Israeli air incursions continued despite frequent calls by United Nations officials and a number of concerned Member States that Israel cease these violations". That is also confirmed by similar reports by representatives of the Secretary-General in the region as documented by the Security Council and the United Nations Secretariat.

In this context, one must recall the massacres committed by Israel against the Lebanese people throughout the 22 years of its occupation, the murders and the perpetration of all kinds of crimes including the incursion of its forces into the capital of Lebanon and the destruction wrought by bombs and missiles of all types over a period of more than 60 days.

It is important to point out that Israel's record in connection with respect for international legitimacy and the implementation of the related resolutions is by no means an honourable one: Israel has been defying the United Nations and its resolutions since 1948 and continues to do so. Resolution 191, concerning the State of Palestine, has remained a dead letter since the date of its adoption and General Assembly resolution 194 (III), on the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, have met with nothing but defiance and rejection on the part of Israel. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the objective of which is to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, are disputed by Israel and meet with every kind of distortion and abuse. That being so, it is possible for all States in the world to speak of international legitimacy and the implementation of Security Council resolutions, apart from Israel which has become a symbol of the violation of international legitimacy and the defiance of United Nations resolutions.

Israel's objective in bringing about a dangerous escalation in southern Lebanon is to divert the attention of the international community from its construction of a separation wall in the West Bank and its ongoing occupation of Arab territories, its construction of settlements there and the undermining of all the peace initiatives supported by the international community and aimed at the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions. All this has made Israel's aggressive policies and its occupation of Arab, Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian territories a source of tension and violence in our region.

The only way out of this dangerous situation in the region is to break the cycle of violence by returning to international legitimacy and a commitment to the implementation of United Nations resolutions decreeing the withdrawal of Israel from Arab territories to the borders of 4 June 1967 and guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, thereby making Israel solely responsible for perpetrating the situation. It is up to the international community to exert pressure on Israel to comply with its wishes and return to the peace process which began in Madrid in 1991 with a view to bringing about a comprehensive and just peace guaranteeing security and stability to all peoples of the region.

Finally, Syria wishes to state once more its commitment to the fundamentals of a just and comprehensive peace as provided for by the Madrid principles, the Arab peace initiative and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Syria has always been, and continues to be, opposed in both word and deed to international terrorism, has participated effectively in international cooperation to combat it and has saved many innocent lives in various parts of the world. Syria is honoured to be a member of the Security Council, to be presiding over it during the current month and to have done so with even-handedness and integrity in June last year, and reaffirms that it will pursue its efforts to calm down the situation, not only in southern Lebanon but in the region as a whole, because the interests of its people so require and on the basis that the security and stability of the region are central to the maintenance of international security and peace. However, this effort continues to be thwarted by the continuous occupation by Israel of Arab territories since 1967.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic would be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly under items 38 (The situation in the Middle East) and 158 (Measures to eliminate international terrorism) of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.